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Is involved fatherhood possible? Structural elements influencing the exercise of paternity in Spain and Norway.

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Introduction

In recent years, public discourse surrounding fatherhood has undergone major changes (Hobson and Morgan, 2002; Gregory and Milner, 2011). The traditional female-male distribution of roles excluded the father from direct involvement in caregiving, but in recent decades families in Western societies have experienced huge transformations that have reshaped these roles. The entry of women into the labour market, the trend towards more egalitarian relationships, together with other demographic and family changes – i.e. low fertility, increased divorce rates or cohabitation – identified as the Second Demographic Transition (Lesthaegue, 1991; Van de Kaa, 2002), have led to a redefinition of care responsibilities, in particular concerning childcare. Consequently, fathers have taken on more prominent roles in this area.

Traditional paternal attitudes have not completely disappeared (Devreux, 2007), but a greater involvement of fathers can be perceived in father-child relationships. New models of "fathers", alternative to the traditional "male breadwinner", have appeared, giving rise to relations founded on love rather than just on power (Bonino, 2003; McGill, 2014; Wall and Arnold, 2007).

The hypothesis underlying this paper is that this transformation has not occurred as a result of changes in individuals' concrete behaviours, but rather as an outcome of structural factors that function as either facilitators or barriers for the advance of this new paternity. To test this hypothesis, this paper has the objective of examining the social

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structures that most influence the development of this new paternity in two different countries, Spain and Norway. These two countries have been selected due to their different approach towards family policies and the dissimilar rates of women's participation in the labour market (Elizalde San Miguel, Díaz Gandasegui and Díaz Gorfinkiel, 2015). While Norway's family policies have promoted an egalitarian family model and there is a general consensus that this has priority within national social policies (Kitterød and Rønsen, 2015), Spanish family policies have been described as recent, inconsistent and uncertain in the family model they aim to promote (León and Moreno, 2013). Therefore, these countries represent strategic examples to analyse the influence that structural dimensions have on the exercise of fatherhood. We will examine here what Wall and Arnold (2007) describe as "the complex connections between the cultural understandings of fatherhood, the possibilities afforded by policy in this area, and actual fathering behaviour or, in more traditional sociological terms, between agency, structure, and ideology" (509).

Background: Involved Fatherhood and Social Structures

The recent transformation of fatherhood has received considerable attention in academic circles. For most of the 20th century, paternity was analysed within the area of psychology, focusing on elements such as the consequences of abandonment or the absence of a father figure in child development. However, the rise of the feminist movement during the 1970s brought with it a new perspective on fatherhood (Vuori, 2009; Gregory and Milner 2011). Fatherhood then began to be compared to motherhood, and its study through the Time Use Surveys has been a prolific research line which has allowed researchers to test and quantify the different involvement of fathers and mothers in terms of looking after their children (Apps and Rees, 2005; Coltrane, 2000; Lamb, 2000; Tobío, 2005).

Since then, fatherhood has become an object of growing academic interest, as it has been conceptualized as an essential mechanism to achieve gender equality (Hobson and Morgan 2002; Kamerman and Moss, 2009; Daly, 2011). This article applies the concept of involved fatherhood as a necessary element for a better distribution of responsibilities between genders, in the belief that a greater involvement of fathers in child care is positive for emotional closeness to children and for the development of different aspects of masculine identity (Lamb, 2000; McGill, 2014; Marsiglio and Roy 2012; Machin, 2015). We have understood 'involved fatherhood' as a notion which represents a transformation of the traditional role of breadwinner and that promotes nurturing, childcare and co-parenting (Machin, 2015; Wall and Arnold, 2007). These involved fathers dedicate more time to the exercise of paternity (Lamb, 2000) and perform more egalitarian attitudes in their discourses (Albert López-Ibor, Escot Mangas and Poza Lara, 2008), although certain values -traditionally associated with masculinity- are still present in their manifestations and behaviours. In spite of the gradual transformation, these new fathers continue to perform as primary breadwinners and secondary carers, since they have been socialized with contradictory values regarding their role as fathers (Domínguez, Jurado and Botía, 2017; Marsiglio, 1995; Wall and Arnold, 2007).

The first decades of the 21st century are, consequently, witnessing a liquid paternity in Bauman's terms, referring to its heterogeneous nature, continuous change and coexistence of different interpretations about fatherhood. The involved fathers of the last decades can be considered a 'bridge' generation (Alberdi and Escario, 2007), as they find themselves between the social structures and new values, motivations and expectations about fatherhood. Therefore, the involved fatherhood analysed here represent the influence of the structure on the individual motivations, signifying that the social context generates different potential scenarios in the development of father involvement. In other

words, the recipe to achieve the ideal of involved fatherhood cannot be defined or replicated, as the situational requirements reveal that the parenting behaviours may have different outcomes according to different contexts (Risman, 1986).

Furthermore, the concept of involved fatherhood arises in reference to two consolidated social constructs: traditional fatherhood, following the hegemonic cultural ideal about paternity (Wall and Arnold, 2007), and traditional motherhood, as "men do not make decisions about their fathering role in a vacuum, but in close relations to the way women make decisions about their mothering role" (Farstad and Stefansen, 2015: 56). This concept therefore constitutes a relative term that will be studied considering social expectations about both fathers and mothers, as will be shown in the empirical section.

The analysis offered in this article is based on the idea that sometimes the social becomes personal (England, 2016) and in that sense, a sociological structural theory which understands that citizens' actions are not only generated by individuals but that they are reproduced within existing constraints established by social structures (Giddens, 1995), has been applied. The structures, according to the Structuration Theory of Giddens, organizes the actions of the agents and constraint, but also facilitates, the social activities. Consequently, gender and parenting are social categories which are constructed by the existing social structures, generating opportunities and limitations. As Eydal and Rostgaard (2016) indicate "fathers come into a set of practices that are already partially shaped by legal prescriptions, economic constrains and cultural definitions" (10). Hence, social structures shape the actions and behaviours of the individuals but, at the same time, the individuals have the possibility to alter the structures, as they are knowledgeable of the leverage they exercise. Thus, the structures are external to the individuals but the human agency (re)creates, sustain and modify the current structures with their actions (Risman, 2013, 2017). Henceforth, the same structures that constrain may be a resource

to transform the social reality, as they facilitate the action of the agents. As Risman explains, "when individuals make choices, they are not purely free choices. Individuals are profoundly shaped by the gender structure that exists before they do and into which they are born" (Risman, 2017: 209-210). According to the Structuration Theory people do not chose how they act or how they think freely but influenced from the social structures in which they are socialized and the interaction with other agents and institutions, which creates routines that reproduce and reinforce the internalized ideas and behaviours. In this sense, according to Risman (2004, 2017), the social structure generates gender behaviour with the recreation of pre-stablished cultural understandings and the pressure exercised by social, economic and political institutions.

Research performed in Scandinavian countries has developed this idea extensively, pointing to the necessary structural reforms that are needed in order to advance in gender equality and increase the involvement of fathers in family life through the implementation of father friendly policies (Haas, 1992; Gornick and Meyers, 2009; O'Brien and Wall, 2017).

The social structures that have been identified in this empirical analysis are the labour market, family policies and gendered expectations towards fathering, three dimensions that connect the society, the institutions and the individuals. Consequently, the different models of fatherhood are the result of the convergence of the macro structures with micro elements and individual's concrete behaviours, as "fatherhood practices are seen as the outcomes of the various negotiation processes within these different structures" (Bloksgaard, 2014: 144). These structures conform, in the same way as the gender structure defined by Risman (2017), "a dynamic system: when one part changes, it can set off a chain reaction like a game of dominoes. There is a dynamic recursive causality

between individual selves, interactional expectations, cultural ideology, and organizational structure" (210).

In that sense, the different structures and institutions are interconnected and influence each other in the socialization of the citizens –the process of internalization of the values, norms and expectations of the society– and the cognitive processes developed in later stages, during the life-cycle of the individuals, when the expectations and social incentives connected with the social categories of the individuals, such as the gender, reshape or reinforce the learning processes occurred during infancy. Consequently, the structural scope of fatherhood should be understood as a complex interplay of different dimensions, external and internal to the agents, which exercise their force directly or indirectly, through multiple channels and diverse processes (Browne and England, 1997). Accordingly, as Browne (2013) indicates, "effective policy must be built upon a nuanced picture of not only how fathers are limited by economic considerations or driven by individual aspirations, but also of how they are constrained by a complex range of structural and institutional factors" (153).

The idea of structure provided by Ervin Goffman (2006), also referred to the structural constraints that influence interactions, since the three social structures previously mentioned act as facilitators or barriers that generate habits and rituals for fathers' involvement, and also establish the negotiations with other agents, fundamentally with mothers. The roles assumed towards parenting represent the convergence of the interactions and negotiations among the different agents, the constraint of the external structures and the internalization of the expectations of the *generalized other* (Browne and England, 1997).

Likewise, the concept of *habitus* defended by Pierre Bourdieu (1997) can also contribute to understanding the idea of structure, defined as a second socially constructed nature in

which lifestyles are generated and assumed. These lifestyles get reproduced and are resistant to (abrupt) changes, because the reiteration of social behaviour and the relevance of the family as a socialising agent makes possible that children internalize the gender differences and develop differential sensitivity and preferences towards certain practices, such as caring. Consequently, the structural constraints generate internal choices, personal characteristics and group dynamics which have an influence on the configuration of collective identities and personal elections (England, 2010). The *habitus* is the internalization of the externalization, the incorporation of the structures in the behaviours, dispositions and sensitivity of the individuals and, at the same time, the reproduction of these structures through actions and ideas. Hence, the *habitus* of fatherhood is firstly internalized in the socialization period and is later replicated through the actions and behaviours of the fathers (and also the mothers). The *habitus* aid to maintain the power and status differences in the society, generating distinct set of choices and reinforcing the differences among social groups, in this case the fathers and the mothers (Correll, 2004).

Data and Methods

This study is based on a methodological triangulation strategy, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative information was obtained from semi-structured interviews, while quantitative secondary sources were used to test the validity of qualitative findings and to check the convergence between different sources of information (Decrop, 1999).

Qualitative Data collection

In order to understand how families in Spain and Norway "construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009), eleven face-to-face

semi-structured interviews were undertaken. The aim was to approach the social discourse built by the different social actors involved in early childcare, following the hypothesis that people's opinions and behaviours are determined by structural dimensions and that "discourses are therefore culturally recognizable societal visions of how things are or should be" (Miller, 2010: 22). Structural factors that shape different ways of fathers' involvement were, therefore, identified in the discourses of the interviewees.

Interviews were conducted between May 2015 and June 2016 and lasted between 40 and 60 minutes.

Participants.

The identification of interviewees was undertaken to achieve a socio-structural representation of the object of study. Hence, to reach key actors that provide detailed experiences of concrete social processes (Vallés, 2002), the following inclusion criteria were considered: i) parents -both fathers and mothers- who were care providers for children aged 0-3 years, since this is the stage previous to formal education; ii) political actors involved in the design and implementation of family policies. Consequently, other variables (as the age of the parents, educational level or number of children) were not considered essential to examine the social discourse which represent the structural factors that shape parents' involvement in childcare.

The participants in the interviews were contacted using a snowball sampling. Interviews were almost evenly divided between the two countries (6 in Norway and 5 in Spain) and between the different social actors: 6 parents were interviewed (two fathers and one mother in Norway and two mothers and one father in Spain) and 5 political actors (3 from the Scandinavian country and 2 from Spain), of which 3 of them combined the policy

perspective with a parental experience, aiding to introduce inputs to analyse fathering from a double viewpoint.

Interview Guides.

An interview guide was designed for each participant's profile, combining specific and open-ended questions. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were undertaken to help interviewees to express freely their experiences, opinion and practices in order to discern their specific structure of meanings (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 1996). The guide for the parents included questions related to three dimensions that were analyzed through their daily experiences, such as distribution of tasks, employment situation and time management. The guide for political actors, on the other hand, concentrated on a description of current services for early childcare from a perspective of the intentionality of those services; consequently, the discourse about the existing measures was examined in relation to gender equality, the legitimacy of the involvement in 'household matters' and the centrality of those resources in the socio-political realm.

Data analysis.

Once the interviews were transcribed, the coding process was guided by the research questions, the revision of background literature and the interviewees' discourses. An initial coding determined the emergence of 'involved fatherhood' as a social novelty in both countries, confirming its analytical relevance. A second coding process revealed the structural dimensions that either facilitate or constrain fathers' involvement in child care: the labour market, family policies and gendered expectations about being a father. NVIVO software was used for the coding and analysis of the discourses in order to classify the information and organize data according to the thematic codes.

Secondary Sources.

Quantitative data was employ to test the coherence of interviewees' discourses with empirical evidences from external sources. The *European Social Survey* (ESS) was used to analyse the structural factor about the "gendered norms for fathering", as it is a cross-national survey that "measures the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns" of European citizens. This data was obtained from the 2010 ESS module on "Family, work, and wellbeing" and specifically from two of its measures: i) Men should have more right to work than women when jobs are scarce; ii) Women should be prepared to cut down on paid work for the sake of family. These indicators reflect the primary role that men and women are expected to perform and, therefore, constitute a relevant source to approach the study of gendered social expectations.

The influence of the labour market on fatherhood has been approached using the *Labour Force Survey*, which provides useful information about how gendered the labour market is. Measures used in this study are: i) employment rates; ii) part-time and full-time employment rates; iii) Reasons for part-time work; iv) Flexibility of working schedules, extracted from the 2010 ad-hoc module on the 'Reconciliation between work and family life'.

Time Use Survey was used in order to show the differences in the use of time by fathers and mothers in the household work. In this way, the differences on the time invested between mothers and fathers reflect the gendered division of tasks in the private sphere as a result of the interaction of the social structures.

Finally, family policies were analysed using existing information in relation to the normative framework in both countries and also revising relevant academic bibliography.

Results: Structural elements which condition types of fatherhood

As the structural theoretical viewpoint above explains, fathers' involvement does not only depend on personal decisions but it is "more a consequence of contexts that are not of men's choosing" (Miller, 2010: 172), and it reflects larger social structures that may either promote or hinder the participation of fathers in childcare. Fathers are usually constrained in their degree of involvement by "national policy, the nature of their contractual employment, and, indeed, the culture of their employing institutions, communities, and society" (Browne, 2013: 162). Indeed, Gender, still, is a very relevant factor to explain the structural differences in the time use in regards of housework and care work (Risman, 2011, 2013).

The study of fatherhood through *Time Use Surveys* has demonstrated extensively that even though women have progressively taken on responsibilities within the labour market, fathers have not become involved in the private sphere in the same way, especially regarding routine tasks (Domínguez et al, 2017), and the testimonials obtained in the interviews were coherent with these findings. A Spanish father, whose partner had quit her job after having the first baby due to the difficulties to reconcile labour and family responsibilities, demonstrated the current contradictions regarding fatherhood. Despite the fact that he explicitly alludes to their intention to equally distribute the home and caring chores, his discourse reflects traditional inequalities. As his partner was unemployed in the moment he was interviewed he defined himself as the "economic driver" of the family, not considering that she is also contributing to the family with her income through her unemployment allowance:

> "*when Sue* [partner] *was employed it was rather more equal, it was forcedly equal, we did it like that, I mean, we shared the tasks, I'd take the baby* [to nursery school] *and she'd pick him up (…) Then, she'd do the bath, or the baby sitter would do it, and Sue would make dinner, eh… and it happened, since she is now*

unemployed, that she is now much more involved in the household tasks. I spend [now] *little time at home. It is difficult to conciliate, er, because now I am the… the... economic driver of the household (...) That is, I get home and I carry on working. I put the boy to sleep and I keep on working, to so say it is not... no, I never finish".* (S., Male, Spain).

Also, a Spanish mother reinforced these ideas of imbalances when she described the contravening responses of her partner's employers when they both (they work in the same company) decided to reduce their working hours as a strategy to balance work and family responsibilities when their daughter was born. The couple described themselves as an egalitarian family, but the external and direct gendered constraints are very visible here, as their labor situation turned different for the father in spite of having similar circumstances. Indeed, the internal inequalities in the familiar negotiations and distribution of tasks are not observed by her as gender-based but rather as a consequence of their personalities and skills:

"*well, like half and half, it depends, I'm lucky in this sense because he likes cooking very much, then, shopping, meals, and all that, he's good at it, he loves it, and it's all for him. And then, household tasks, we share. It's always more on me, but well… I always put the girl to bed, but the truth is that we share rather well (…) I have always been more in charge of household tasks, but that is because of my personality, because I am an organizer-fan, and he is very chaotic, he is the typical person that leaves everything wherever. It is truth, he cooks, but when he cooks you look at the kitchen and you think "oh, my God, look at the kitchen!" And I am very, very organized. So, sometimes I think, it is me who is always looking after having the house neat, but more or less, we share*" (V., Female, Spain)

In Norway the equal distribution of home tasks seems to be more extended. One interviewee, who recently became a father and whose partner is on maternity leave described their daily routines and how they try to balance the home and care responsibilities:

> "*A typical day, I leave at 8 am for work, and come back at 5 pm, and then it is my time for the baby, feed him, prepare him for bed, he goes to bed around 7, and then it's time to clean, so I have time for myself from 8 pm, or in the worst case from 9, it's not so bad"* (H., Male, Norway)

However, gender imbalances also remain in the domestic sphere in Norway. As it is the case in Spain, inequalities have been reduced with regard to childcare but are still significant when referring to home tasks. In this sense, a policy maker, when she was questioned about the existing challenges to achieve gender equality pointed, precisely, to the unequal distribution of domestic work:

> *"Women work more* [at home]. *Women use 50% more time on housework but it has been narrowing towards children. The fathers have increased the amount of time with the children, but domestic work is still most put on women"* (K., Policy maker, Norway).

Norway has explicitly promoted gender equality through specific social policies over the last few decades (Rønsen & Kitterød, 2015), which have aid to increase citizens' awareness about embedded gender inequalities. However, this knowledge and intention to transform the social reality does not imply that satisfactory outcomes have been achieved. In this way, the Norwegian father who explained that they tried to distribute home and caring activities equally with his partner also recognized that the time invested in home tasks is not even:

> *"She does more than I do, and she always has. In fact there is an agreement, and I take care of technical issues and she takes care of household issues, of course, it is a joke, because I do things in the house, but she does more than I do."* (H., Male, Norway).

All these testimonials are coherent with the descriptive findings observed in the Use of Time Surveys mentioned above, that shows relevant differences between Spain and

Norway (figure 1). While men are less involved than women in household chores in both countries, this gap is much more pronounced in Spain (2 hours difference against 1 hour in Norway), where the distribution of responsibilities is more traditional.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUTHERE

The different degrees of inequality in these countries point to the fact that certain structural elements might explain fathers' involvement and, therefore, these structures could be used to promote involved fatherhood. Qualitative data obtained in Spain and Norway allowed us to identify the structural dimensions that mostly influence fathers' involvement: gendered norms towards parenting, labour market and family policies. These are interconnected spheres that mutually reinforce each other, but they have also enough autonomy to be examined independently.

Gendered norms towards parenting

The concept of fatherhood reflects a social imaginary that is shaped by the symbolic representations of beliefs, stereotypes and values (Lupton and Barclay, 1997). A distinctive characteristic of the new-involved fatherhood relies on the idea that men and women must share responsibilities both inside and outside the home, and fathers should actively be involved with their children (Alberdi and Escario, 2007; Kitterød and Rønsen, 2015).

However, personal experiences still reflect that women are perceived, and see themselves, as the main responsible subjects for child provision. In this sense, as Risman (2017:213) points out, expectations and intentions or desires are sometimes conflictive, 'we are held accountable to gendered norms, whether we choose to meet those expectations or reject them, expectations exist', and their existence constrain our behaviour and ideas. One of the policy makers interviewed in Spain, who defined herself as a feminist, explained the

ambivalences between the discourses and the practices, referring to the her own experience after becoming a mother:

> *"My experience as a childcare provider, being a feminist, has been horrible, when I had my baby I was absolutely aware that I was taking up a reproductive social role, what did that mean to me? (...) This is going to sound bad, but it is true, there were moments when my child was so small that he* [her partner] *was expendable, I mean, my relationship was strictly with my baby and he was expendable, this is true and I thought 'he is so annoying, it is so good just being my baby and me'"* (F., policy maker, Spain).

The internal debate of a feminist mother about her relationship with her baby as the main care provider constitutes a good illustration of the different *habitus* of mothers and fathers. The gendered norms and, specifically, the different caring roles internalized during the socialization period develops distinct predispositions and sensibilities towards certain activities and these actions and behaviours creates collective identities, personal choices and, also, aid to reproduce the same structures that generates a particular socialization of the individuals. In this respect, the policy maker interviewed pointed out that a possible solution is to modify the internalization of this inequality. The policy maker reflected, in this way, relevant features of the Structuration Theory, as the agents are knowledgeable of the constraint exercise by the structures and are able to use the facilities provided by them to recreate and transform social activities.

> *"encouraging men's role in care providing, not penalising but rather stimulating it for men, through education, education in emotions and in care provision from young ages, for everyone, eh, an education that also teaches women that they don't necessarily have to care for because someone else will do it, because the problem is that we [*women*] believe that if we don't provide care, no one else is going to make it, well,... sometimes it is true that no one else is going to make it*" (F., policy maker, Spain).

The roles internalized during the socialization period, which are reinforced during the life-cycle of the individuals, produces embedded stereotypes, archetypes and ascriptions to certain activities, such as associating women to care activities. In this line, one Spanish father interviewed justified the decision, after internal negotiation, of dividing the familiar responsibilities between the labour market –the father– and the caring activities at home –the mother–, not considering (and justifying) the choice of not hiring external caregiving resources.

> *"Because* [her former job] *was not… neither the money was enough to live comfortably nor… did she have time to enjoy… to be with Nico* [the baby] *and share time with him (…) to afford to work that many hours her job would demand, she would have to earn much more money, because she has to hire another person to replace her in the family sphere, let's say" (S., Male, Spain)*

Thus, in his manifestation there is a traditional interpretation of a male breadwinner model and a consequent consideration of female employment as a complement to the male job and women's caring and domestic responsibilities. Thus, the existing gendered norms about parenting allocate a different degree of involvement not only in time use but also in the responsibility in childcare, representing (traditional) gendered roles that have been described as masculine auto-exclusion and feminine embracement (Alberdi and Escario, 2007).

In Norway the internalisation of more equal roles and a shared sense of responsibility towards childcare were reflected in the interviews. However, father's involvement in childcare concurred with a secondary carer role:

> "*That came in a natural way* [to be with the baby after work], *it looks evident that when my wife has spent the whole day with him, I want to spend time with him, with no negotiation. What we discussed was how to do it at night when he wakes up* [laughs]*"* (H., Male, Norway)

Despite the public and private efforts to distribute home and caring responsibilities equally, even Norwegian families that define themselves as egalitarian are facing unbalances, as this policy maker, mother of three children, expressed:

> *"with my two younger children my husband had more time with them. But we did not share 50%. I am a little embarrassed with it. With my last child maybe I was at home for 8 months and he was for 6 months, so it was more equal but it was not totally 50/50, and we are seen as a gender balance couple"* (S., Policy maker, Norway)

However, the generational change of the fathers towards more involvement was also mentioned by another interviewee from Norway, a divorced father who defended shared custody as the best solution to assume a common responsibility over the children, acknowledging the transformation of these situations:

> "*I think it is becoming increasingly normal, yes. (...) I would guess is still more normal to have the mother as the main parent, but I think it's getting increasingly common, and I don't think it's rare*" (I., Male, Norway)

All these testimonies, in both countries, raise the current issues regarding the egalitarian model of family, also reflecting the current contradictions comprise in the development of "involved fatherhood", the conflicts, which are more visible in Spain, between the expressed values, the theory, and the practices of the citizens. Empirical evidence from the *European Social Survey*, in fact, supports this ambiguity. Data from this source does not conclude that this model of equality has been fully internalised in both countries. In this sense, figures 2 and 3 show the existing gendered expectations of behaviour in the work-family domain, showing people's opinion regarding whether men should be privileged over women when jobs are scarce (figure 2) and whether women should leave their jobs to favour family demands if necessary (figure 3). In regards to the first item, there is consensus in both countries that equality should prevail when referring to the

"right to work", refusing the idea that men should have priority in the labour market. Spain, nevertheless, shows lower rejection levels to this scenario (figure 2).

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

However, when employment considerations clash with the private sphere differences arises (figure 3).

INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

Almost half of respondents in Spain agreed with the idea that women should abandon their jobs in favour of family wellbeing, while 20% of Norwegians accepted that postulate. Therefore, it seems that when confronted to conflicting priorities, gender-equal decisions are harder to accept than the general and abstract idea of equal rights expressed before (figure 1), in which the socially acceptable discourses are predominant. Thus, the values about the "ideal" carer for children show distinct expectations towards the responsibilities assumed by fathers and mothers. Even though the ideal of equality is largely accepted in both countries, fathers still seem to play a secondary-carer role, although in Norway they claim and perform a more active role. These different gendered values and norms are transmitted to the children during the socialization stage as gendered expectations of behaviour, and can shape their views, associating masculine and feminine references with distinct activities, creating cognitive schemas to become cultural natives in societies with different gender roles (Risman, 2004; Flaquer, Navarro and Antón, 2016). Hence, socialization in the assumption of equal care responsibilities from both fathers and mothers is a necessary structural change if countries aim to transform the role of the fathers in future generations.

The labour market

There is consensus in the academic literature, when asserting the relationship between public and private spheres, stressing that the increase in female employment leads to a

greater gender equality (Craig, 2007), a redistribution of caring chores (Tobío, 2015) and a greater implication of men in childcare (Meil and Rogero García, 2014). Also, as these structures are interconnected, it can be argued that more equality in home and caring responsibilities produces a less sex-specific labour market distribution (Lappegard, 2008). However, to facilitate this it is necessary to develop a comprehensive and effective set of work-life balance resources. As it has been explained above, the absence of these mechanisms means that, when both roles are perceived as conflicting (parenting and employment) social inertia leads women to abandon or limit their professional expectations, while fathers do not feel compelled, at least in the same manner, by this confrontation. Spain and Norway seem to be at different stages in these processes. Female employment has increased continuously in Spain and Norway from the second half of the 20th century, but its expansion took place in the 1960s in Norway while in Spain it happened three decades later (Tobío, 2015), hindering the assimilation and settlement of the necessary adjustments in gender relations.

Interviewees in both countries expressed their awareness and concerns about those differences, pointing to a reality in the labour market that in spite of the significant advances achieved in the last decades still discriminates women when they reach the expected age of maternity. One participant, a Polish mother who has been living in Norway for almost a decade, where she had two daughters, expressed this confrontation between the socially accepted equalitarian gender values and the reality of the labour market:

> "*Almost every company accept the 2 weeks* [for fathers, after the baby is born] *because it's considered acceptable, but companies don't like the 8 weeks for fathers* [fathers' quota]. *Even in Norway, it's a paradox of this country, women earn relatively little money compared to men, if you see the labour market women are nurses, kindergarten teachers, teachers, social workers, they make care-*

related jobs and they are not paid properly in comparison with the oil industry" (A., Female, Norway).

As figure 4 shows, employment rates are still sex-specific in both countries; male rates are notably higher than female rates throughout their entire lifecycle, but the difference is significantly bigger in Spain. These gendered differences, as it was explained in the previous section, are a reflection of the dissimilar social expectations, of mothers and fathers, towards childcare, but also reinforces these roles.

INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE

A comparative analysis of the employment rates by sex and country shows the different impact of having offspring in both countries (figure 5). In Spain, employment rates for both sexes are rather similar at young ages, but the difference in employment rates between men and women start to increase around women's mean age at childbirth (30.7), showing a gendered distribution of tasks between the public and private sphere. It is significant that in Norway, the difference between men's and women's employment rates increases at a faster rate in this period of life (28.9 years is women' mean age at first child; 31.3 men's), although this difference is reduced after a few years, presumably when the children are enrolled in pre-school services.

INSERT FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE

The participants in our research, in both countries, expressed that becoming a mother has implications for women's professional careers:

"The first problem is that nowadays it is more difficult for a woman to find a job, because the boss is going to think that she will soon be a mother, as soon as he gives her a fixed contract" (I., Male, Norway).

"… I had the chance of other positions, and I was told directly that I had chosen to be a mother and then I couldn't…" (V., Female, Spain).

Other complementary indicators, as part-time work rates and flexible work arrangements, also provide evidences of gendered differences in the labour market that limit fathers' availability for childcare in both countries. In this regard, figure 6 shows that working part-time is more extended in Norway than in Spain, but that in both cases it is rarely used by men. Men in both countries are, therefore, usually working full time.

INSERT FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE

Moreover, in both countries the reasons given by men to work part-time (figure 7) do not reflect a choice to reduce the working hours to dedicate more time to childcare responsibilities but to respond to individual motives, such as educational training (fundamentally in Norway) or the unavailability of full-time jobs (the most common reason in Spain).

INSERT FIGURE 7 ABOUT HERE

It is women in both countries who express that part-time jobs are deeply associated to reconciliation of family and working life. Consequently, those fathers who decide to work part-time for family reasons face lack of understanding by companies (and sometimes also by primary groups such as the extended family). In this line, a Spanish mother explained the reaction of the employers of her partner (also their employers, as they work together) when they both decided to reduce their working hours, comparting two similar situations which had different outcomes. Her words reflect the convergence of the constraints from the labour market in regards of father's involvement in childcare and the social and cultural expectations about the gender division of responsibilities:

"His reduction is worse seen than mine. Now there are three women that have given birth recently and the three of us work part-time. He is the only man that has been recently a father that reduced working hours, and it is worse seen, 'why

> *do you have to have a reduction if she already has it?' (...) In the family, yes, not on my side, no, because on my side they don't really care about what I do or what I don't do, but on Andrés' side they do. It is not so common for men to get reduced* [hours]*, 'Why do you need a reduction? They're going to make you pay', and yes, it is true, they make you pay"* (V., Female, Spain).

Flexible work arrangements, on the other hand, are a relevant resource both to manage regular circumstances, such as the lack of coordination between school and work timetables, and unexpected situations, such as illnesses. In this respect, the differences between these two countries are notable, as in Norway working flexible hours is promoted by companies as a measure to reduce stress and improve family well-being (Hill et al 2001; Peters, Dulk and Lippe, 2009) and, consequently, *flexitime* has become common among fathers. In Spain only a minority of workers can make use of this benefit (figure 8).

INSERT FIGURE 8 ABOUT HERE

Because of this rigid work schedule, men in Spain experience more difficulties than in Norway to adjust their working day to their children's needs. Also, the lack of a clear policy in this regard provokes individual negotiations, inside the families or between the workers and employees, and in both scenarios the social expectations analysed previously revitalize the traditional prospects associated with each gender role, in which men dedicate more time to work and women to caring activities. Indeed, in Spain, despite the existence of legislation which explicitly recognises the right to look after children, the discourses of some interviewees show that those men that ask to reduce their working hours are penalized, as this is perceived as an individual whim. In Norway, on the other hand, the situation is more ambiguous: the involvement of fathers is officially promoted, and the generalization of flexible working hours place Norwegian fathers with more resources to attend childcare needs than in Spain, but still the situation of men and women

in the labour market (in terms of average salary, occupations and sectors) demonstrates that certain traditional gender inequalities are yet present. Two policy makers, who are also mothers, explained the negative reaction of their partners' employers when they assumed an involved father role, reflecting that the transformation of the structures is slow and gradual and sometimes produces an asynchrony (and conflict) between the traditional and emerging ideas and values:

> *"When my child was born my husband refused to do overtime and, my child is already 13 and since that moment he has not received a single extra hour".* (F., Policy maker, Spain).

> *"His boss wasn't angry or anything, but he was… surprised, because he asked for longer leave… and he wouldn't have if it had been the other way round, if the mother had been the one asking for it. I'm sure he wouldn't have been so surprised".* (S., Policy maker, Norway).

In short, the analysis of the labour market shows how the transition from a traditional model to one with greater paternal involvement still generates a series of ambiguities and contradictions. Despite advances in recent years, the generalization of a new fatherhood requires the internalization of a new set of values together with a structural transformation of the current constrains that generate a different outcome for men and women, fathers and mothers, in their professional activities.

Family policies

Family policies, as shown before, are a good indicator about who the State holds responsible for child care. Paternity leave constitutes a fundamental strategy to incorporate men into child care, as research has proved that when parental time allocated to fathers is increased, responsibility grows, emotional bonds are intensified and men's abilities and self-perception as carers are more positive (Castellanos Serrano, Escot

Mangas, Fernández Cornejo and Poza Lara, 2013). Despite this, the current design of paternity leave is still ambivalent in this sense (figure 9).

INSERT FIGURE 9 ABOUT HERE

In Spain, the 16 weeks for mothers and 4 weeks for fathers indicate the promotion of an non-egalitarian family but one based on gender specialization with distinct rights, resource distributions and expectations for fathers and mothers. There is the possibility of transferring 10 weeks of the leave from the mother to the father, but studies have shown that people do not make use of rights that they do not regard as their own (Castro García and Pazos Morán, 2007). Fathers do not often take these opportunities for child care as it seems to be a 'donation' from their partners and they are not compelled to make use of them. Indeed, the available data confirm that only 1.87% of men made use of this part of the maternity leave in 2015 (Ministry of Employment and Social Security, 2015). The fact that the biggest part of the leave corresponds to the mother and it is only transferable after internal negotiation implies that, institutionally and normatively, the father is not appointed as an equal carer of the new-born. In this way, a mother reflected the aftermath of an unbalance parental leave with her experience:

> *"*[we have done it] *as it is established for first-time parents: the mother looks after the child and the father works. (…) he used to do it* [to be with the baby] *but I always did more, it has nothing to do to be a mother 6 months with a father leave of 15 days, the connections that get generated are not the same. That's inevitable."* (V., Female, Spain).

In Norway since 2009 paternity leave has offered apparent equality in the care of children, as both mothers and fathers have the right to 10 weeks of leave after the birth of a child (mothers also have three weeks of leave before giving birth due to health reasons) and they can divide other 26 weeks between themselves. This egalitarian and non-transferable system represents a significant advance in the development of family policies to promote

gender equality (Castro García and Pazos Morán, 2016; Brandth and Kvande, 2016), as it is designed to equalize, in terms of time, what is considered an identical responsibility towards new-born children and also result in a more balanced gendered division regarding work-family responsibilities (Locke & Yarwood, 2017). In this sense, the parental leave is a good example of how the different structural dimensions are interconnected, because the equality on the leave is more effective when is complemented with less sex-specific division in the labour market (Lappegard, 2008).

The efforts of Norwegian family policies to promote the involvement of fathers in childcare and more balanced gender relations was present in the discourses of some of the interviewees, as the benefits of having egalitarian relations were highlighted as an asset in comparison to other countries, and as an advanced to increase citizens' awareness of shared responsibilities.

> *"I heard that it was possible* [to be able to divide paternity leave] *and this would be unbelievable in Poland. I didn't like the gendered distribution of roles in Poland (...) and when I heard that it was possible here I could not imagine a better way of organizing it"* (A., Female, Norway).

However, the existence of a divisible quota in the parental leave, a characteristic of the optionality of the Norwegian system, creates a contradictory situation. On the one hand, and from a theoretical perspective, the days which will be allocated to each parent are not identified and it is up to the families to decide who is going to use that part of the leave; but on the other hand, from a practical point of view, the social structures already mentioned, such as gendered expectations about fatherhood and the labour market, result in an unbalanced use of this sharable part of the leave. In Norway very few fathers make use of the weeks that are not considered an individual right, as it is estimated that men make use of 18% of the total paternal leave (Kvande and Brandth, 2017) and no significant advances have been made in the last few years (Vuori, 2009; Stinus Bru de

Sala, 2015). Women usually spend the first 36 weeks of the baby's life at home (10 of their own and 26 of the shared ones), and it is more common for men to make use of 10 of the assigned weeks once the mother's quota ends. In this way, a Norwegian father and a policy maker were critical with the optionality of the leave and the consequences of transferring this negotiation to the families:

> *"We know that, when fathers are not forced to take the leave, then, eh, it's, yeah, normally the mothers who stay at home. And, well, I think, I think it's a nice thought that the family should choose themselves, but we know, when we see it, how it works (...) Since in most couples the men earnings are more important it would mean in the negotiation about the leave that there is more money to lose if the man takes the leave"* (L., Policy maker, Norway).

> *"I believe that mothers should get 6 months [leave], and father should get 6 months. so, it's like 1 year in total. I think they should do this, and it will no longer be an issue (...) I'm also sure this will create better... men, you know, if they have to stay at home 6 months with the child, eh, the parents, they will also take more responsibility for cleaning and make cooking, and, staff like this, right? (I., Male, Norway)*

Moreover, in Norway where in principle there is an institutional policy of gender equality, there are more complex administrative processes when the father decides to make use of the shared quota. In this sense, one of the interviewees described his administrative experience when claiming the divisible part of the leave:

> *"You can choose, but it is not a popular option, because at work they would say to me 'ah you're sharing, that's cool', but it is more difficult to fill in the forms; if the mother takes all of it until 8 weeks there is only one form, but if not you have to fill in 3 forms and describe and explain the percentages and your salary and you have to confirm it with the employer, which is more complicated, you have to go around more, and you have to ask a lot of institutions for help".* (A., Female, Norway).

These administrative obstacles show that the expectation is for the father to waive looking after the children, showing that certain values consciously considered obsolete are still present in a latent way.

In short, the overall provision for parental leave shows remarkable differences between both countries in length, design and the intentions of the policies. In the Spanish case, it is the judicial framework that discriminates against men in their rights and obligations to look after children, with a shorter leave than for mothers. In Norway, the principles that led to the creation of a normative framework are distorted in their application through their coexistence alongside traditional values, resulting in obvious inequalities in their distribution. Another relevant difference is that Spanish fathers, due to the distribution of the parental leave, are not normally understood to be the carers responsible for their new-borns and, consequently, they are perceived and they perceive themselves as complements to the mothers. A Spanish policy maker and mother, who stated that parental leaves should be equal and indivisible, retrospectively described the familiar negotiation and distribution of the parental leave with her partner, reflecting in her discourse the current contradictions about the desires and the existing legal and cultural constraints, the ideals and the social reality:

> *"I took it all, the complete maternity leave and one year of leave because my position was reserved for one year (...) Well, Pedro is free all afternoon, he has the work...so we were together."* (F., Policy maker, Spain)

Family policies work, therefore, as a structural element which catalyses the distribution of children care between fathers and mothers. However, this analysis shows that despite the differences in public policy design in both countries, the use that couples make of parental leave, and therefore the duty of care, centres mostly on the mother. This is influenced by other factors, such as the inequalities that the labour market produces and

the influence of traditional gender roles, which distribute the responsibility for child care unequally. Hence, the redistribution of care responsibilities is fundamental to transform paternity in a structural way and, in this sense, institutional reforms must be accomplished in order to develop family policies that promote equal responsibilities and rights to take care of children.

Conclusions

A greater involvement of parents in child care must become a social priority, as it serves a double objective: on the one hand, it contributes towards gender equality, representing a route to 'backdoor equality', as the greater involvement of parents in childcare may produce a transformation of the gender roles in domestic and private spheres (Bailey, 2015). On the other hand, it eases children's emotional and educational development, as pointed out within the paediatric sphere (Wilson and Prior, 2011). The growth in recent decades of research, debates, policies and programmes which aim to achieve greater gender equality within homes and transform paternity show that we are faced with a period of change in this area and that there is still potential for modifying the constrained exercised by the social structures and the subsequent subjective perceptions and gendered behaviours about fatherhood (Sanfélix Albelda, 2011). The parents that participated in this research can be considered a 'hinge' generation as they have been experiencing different socialization processes from their fathers and also they have assimilated different values from their social contexts. Their experience reflects how the structures and the values are changing gradually and also demonstrates the importance of accelerating and promoting this transformation through specific measures, such as family policies, which have a relevant impact on the social structure. Moreover, the analysis of two countries with different welfare states and with different objectives when it comes to

gender equality and the involvement of fathers in paternity has brought out the importance of structural elements when aiming to change dynamics. In this way, the data and discourses from the Norwegian case are characterized by promoting a type of fatherhood with the same involvement in child care as mothers. However, this research has demonstrated that the official image of equality has many nuances, as inequalities are still present both in the labour market and in the distribution of household chores indicating the emergence of a process that requires time and consideration of all the structural variables in a holistic manner. In this sense, the families' option to choose certain childcare strategies seems to open up a division in which some traditional values emerge which have a negative effect on gender equality.

In Spain, the interviewees and data reflect a different reality in which fathers are still mostly secondary carers. Here, ambiguities are more noticeable due to the coexistence of modern ideas, which aim to change the role of fathers and their involvement with children, with behaviours representing traditional models. This is especially obvious in new generations, who want to see fathers being able to look after their children in the same way as mothers but who are also expected to have the same presence as always in the labour market. The conflict that arises between these ideas produces contradictory answers in new fathers, sparking a variety of positions and attitudes which may reflect an ongoing process which requires more coherent and consolidated transformation, with an alignment of the different social structures.

In conclusion, this structural analysis of paternity shows how contradictions and ambiguities are present in both countries, but also shows that the rate and direction of change is different. This indicates that the future of fatherhood depends mostly on the changes that are effected in structures that have so far not managed to alter the inertia in the traditional division of care and the involvement of parents with their children. In this

way, the concept of *habitus* (Bordieu, 1997) is essential to understand the effect of socialisation as a mechanism which reproduces social behaviours, as is the case with paternity, and also, to comprehend the social construction of this, which allows us to observe it as a model characterised by a certain rigidity, but which is potentially transformable. In this sense, one of the women interviewed expressed her frustration at the difficulty of changing certain entrenched inequalities in society despite individual action, and on the importance of generating robust changes in structure:

> *"Because the division of roles lives on as a structural element, it is impossible to get out of those roles. Even if you are an egalitarian couple they are much stronger, much much stronger, even if your emotional way of experiencing child care, and your involvement and bond with your children, with your parents, it is much stronger. The social penalties if you do not comply with it are much greater, so you find yourself unable to get out of it".* (F., Female, Spain).

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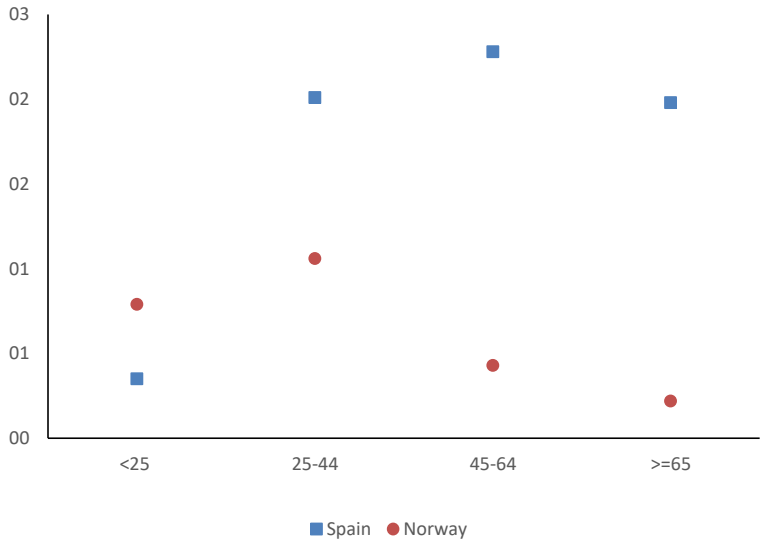
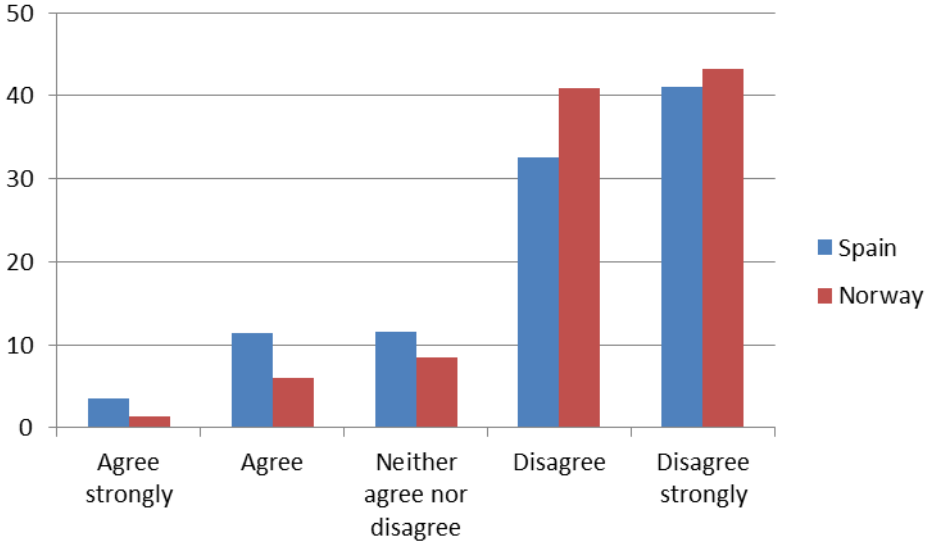
Figure 1: Difference in time spent by mothers/fathers on household work and family by age groups (in hours)



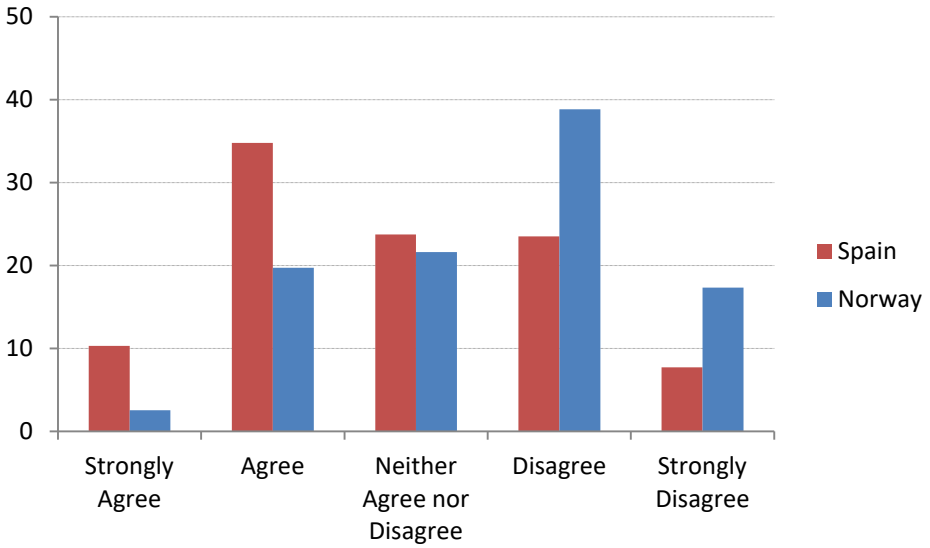
Source: own elaboration based on Time Use Survey 2010.

Figure 2: Men should have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce (%). 2010.



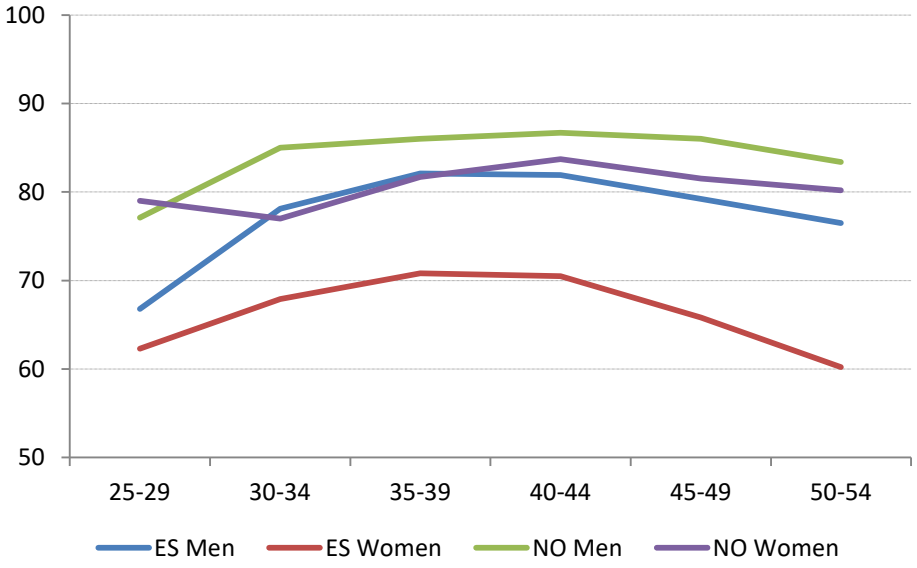
Source: European Social Survey, 2010.

Figure 3: Opinion about whether women should be prepared to cut down on paid work for the sake of family (%). 2010.



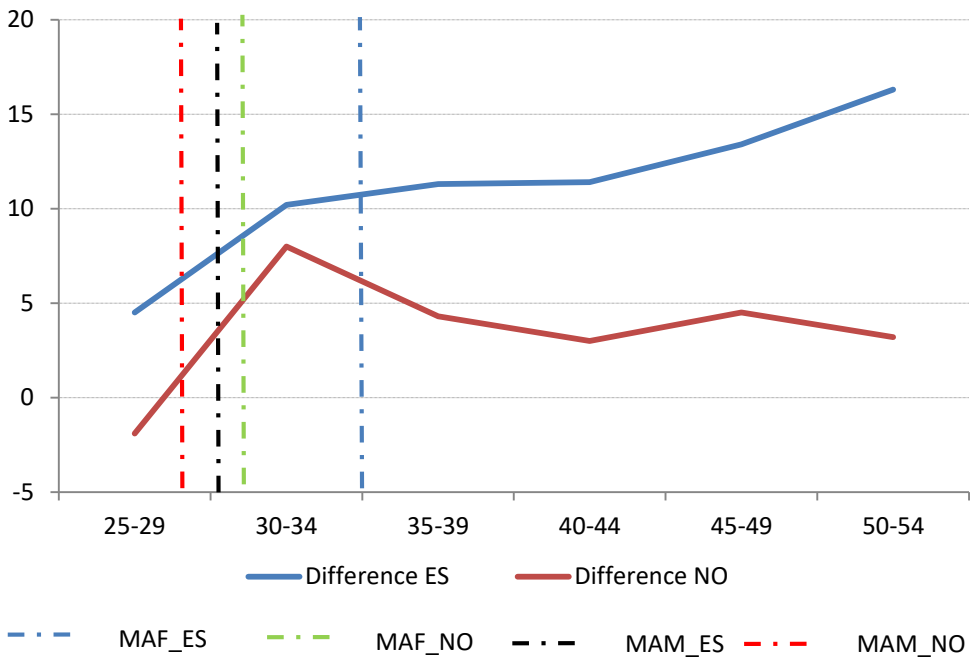
Source: European Social Survey, 2010.

Figure 4: Employment rate by sex and age groups, 2016



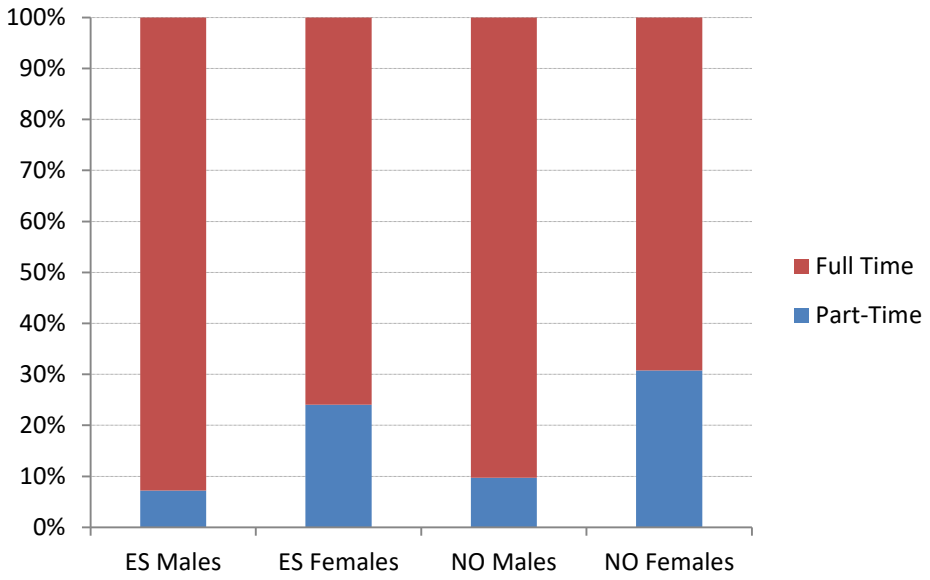
Source: Employment rates, own elaboration based on Labour Force Survey.

Figure 5: Differences in employment rates (men – women) by age group and Mean Age at Fatherhood-Motherhood (first child), 2016



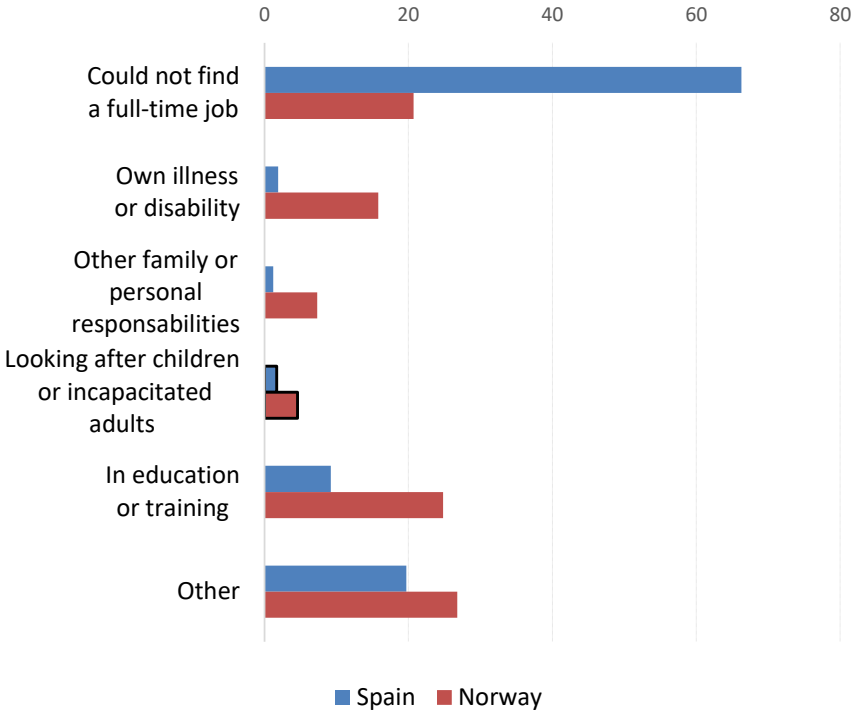
Source: Employment rates, own elaboration based on Labour Force Survey. Mean age at first child, own elaboration based on birth statistics.

Figure 6: Full time and Part-time employment by sex, 2016



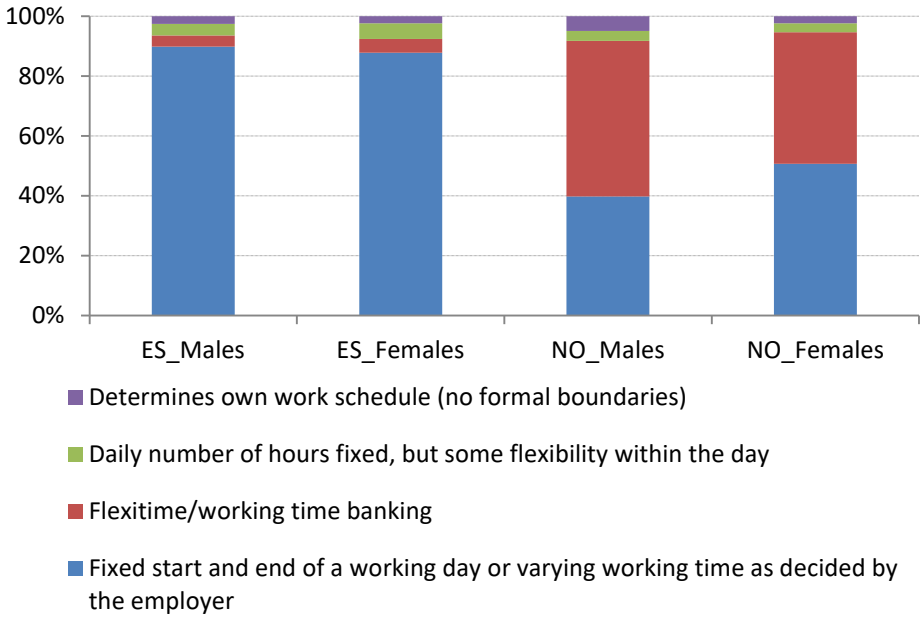
Source: own elaboration based on Labour Force Statistics

Figure 7: Men's main reason for part-time employment, aged 25-49 years. 2010



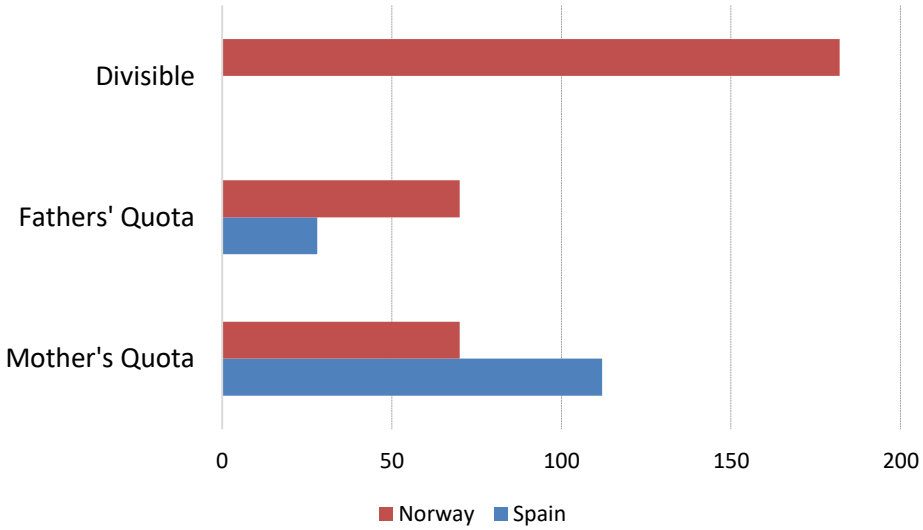
Source: own elaboration based on Labour Force Survey.

Figure 8: Employees by flexibility of their working schedule, 2010



Source: own elaboration based on Labour Force Survey (ad-hoc module 2010)

Figure 9: Length of parental leave (days)



Source: own elaboration.